

REMARKS

Entry of the foregoing amendments, favorable reconsideration, reexamination, and allowance of the present patent application are respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Telephonic Discussions

Applicant and the undersigned wish to extend their thanks to Mr. Wiehe, the patent examiner in charge of this application, for the courtesy of the telephonic discussions that were conducted on 26 June 2006 concerning the foregoing amendments. While Mr. Wiehe could not formally indicate that these amendments place the application in condition for allowance, he did indicate that they appeared to do so.

Allowed Claims

Applicant gratefully acknowledges that Claims 1-4, 7, 8, 13, 14, and 16 have been allowed.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

In the Office Action, beginning at page 3, Claims 10 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as reciting subject matters that allegedly are indefinite. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this rejection.

Applicant has carefully reviewed Claims 10 and 12, and has revised Claim 12 to remove redundant recitations and to better relate to the subject matter recited in Claim 1, from which Claim 1 depends. Claim 10 has been cancelled without prejudice.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that Claim 12 fully complies with 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, and therefore respectfully requests withdrawal of the rejection thereof under 35 U.S.C. § 112.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

In the Office Action, beginning at page 4, Claims 5 and 6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as reciting subject matters that allegedly are obvious, and therefore allegedly unpatentable, over *Bartos* in view of the disclosure of U.S. Patent No. 5,165,847, issued to Proctor, while Claim 15 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as reciting subject matter that allegedly is obvious, and therefore allegedly unpatentable, over *Bartos* in view of *Rizk*. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of these rejections.

Claim 5 has been revised back to a scope similar to that originally presented, and now depends from Claim 1; Claim 6 depends from Claim 5. Accordingly, the rejections of these claims are now moot.

Concerning Claim 15, the Office Action twice indicated that Claim 15 would be allowable were the claim amended to indicate that the groove is 'axially open'. See pages 3 and 6 of the Office Action. While Applicant still strongly believes that the subject matter of Claim 15 is allowable for at least the reasons presented in the Amendment filed 21 February 2006, Applicant has elected to amend Claim 15 in the manner suggested in the Office Action. Accordingly, Claim 15 is in condition for allowance, an early indication of which is earnestly solicited. Mr. Wiehe is invited to telephone the undersigned if, during his review of this application prior to the issuance of Notices of Allowance and Allowability, any additional issues arise concerning Claim 15.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that the subject matters of Claims 5, 6, and 15, each taken as a whole, would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention, are therefore not unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), and therefore respectfully requests withdrawal of the rejection thereof under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Conclusion

Applicant respectfully submits that the present patent application is in condition for allowance. An early indication of the allowability of this patent application is therefore

respectfully solicited.

If Mr. Wiehe believes that a telephone conference with the undersigned would expedite passage of this patent application to issue, he is invited to call on the number below.

It is not believed that extensions of time are required, beyond those that may otherwise be provided for in accompanying documents. If, however, additional extensions of time are necessary to prevent abandonment of this application, then such extensions of time are hereby petitioned under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a), and the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge fees necessitated by this paper, and to credit all refunds and overpayments, to our Deposit Account 50-2821.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: 26 June 2006

¹ 37 C.F.R. § 1.4(d)(3)